68: Mouhot--154 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 431, 576, 556, 609

"I am literally pillaged by these petty mandarins and chiefs of villages, [HD: in southern Luang Prabang province] and have to give away guns, sabres, lead, powder, colours, pencils, and even my paper; and then, after having received their presents, they will not put themselves out of their way to do me the smallest service. I would not wish my most deadly foe, if I had one, to undergo all the trouble and persecution of this kind which I have encountered."

king of Luang-Prabang could make themselves heard more effectively than he himself could. 648* 643* 175*

/190/ First mission to China (1729). Intha-Som recognized the truth of this bit of advice and in 1729 charged Phya-Muong-Khoua, Phya-Mune and Phya-Sivongsa to go to the emperor of China, deliver two elephants to him as a gift and ask him to recall the Mousseux. 563 /431/

After a long voyage the mission reached Pekin without any untoward happening. They were welcomed most courteously and the Chinese government promised to give satisfaction, but only on condition that the king of Luang-Prabang should continue to send a pair of elephants every five years. An agreement was reached on this basis and the ambassadors brought back to Luang-Prabang the assurance that the Mousseux would be invited to return to their own country (1).

1. The viceroy of "Muong-Se-Luong" received orders to recall all the Mousseux to China. The orders must have been carried out rather ineffectively, for today the Mousseux still form an important group in the region of Muong-Sing.

Second mission to China (1734). A second mission also led by Phya-Muong-Khoua left five years later to deliver the promised tribute, but on their way encountered bands of robbers called "White Flags" who forced them to fall back /191/ on Muong-La. Phya-No-Muong placed an escort of five hundred men at their disposition and sent word to the Chinese governor of Yunnan-Sen who also sent out a detachment at once to disperse the pirates. The latter's leaders were finally captured and handed over to the emperor's delegate. The ambassadors were then able to fulfill their mission and returned to Luang-Prabang laden with gifts for their king (1). 648* 175* /579/

1. The Guimet Museum has the seal which was delivered by China to the "Sovereigns of Laos" when the Tartaro-Manchu dynasty acceded to the throne, "in exchange for the one which they held from the Ming dynasty." (Pavie, A la conquete des coeurs, p. 347.) Intha-Som was therefore reviving an age-old tradition. This seal, which was carried off by Deo-van-Tri when Luang-Prabang was sacked by his

Another version states, on the contrary, that there was no treason and no marriage and that the gate was merely forced during an attack. 726 175*

Whatever the case may be, Chao-Nan's troops entered the city, massacred a large number of inhabitants and took many families in captivity to Vientiane. Anourout had enough time to flee and to take refuge in Siam.

Loss of the Houa-Phan. Chao-Nan imposed his conditions on Luang-Prabang, but he did not dare to push his conquest as far as an annexation which the suzerain of the Menam would not have tolerated. He was content with annexing the cantons of the Houa-Phan and with forbidding all relations between the principality and Tran-Ninh (1). 648* 175*

1. Chao-Nan was not destined to enjoy his victory for long. We have seen elsewhere (p. 158) the fate held in store for him by Siam, which deposed him and assigned him Bangkok as his residence.

Anourout was held in Bangkok until 1793 and was liberated by the Siamese only after the intervention of the emperor of China. He rebuilt the ruins of his capital and constructed several pagodas, notably the Wat-Mai. Old and impotent, he abdicated in 1817 in favor of his /201/ son Mantha-Thourath and died two years later. 643* 175*

MANTHA-THOURATH (1775), KING 1817-1836.

Relations with Vientiane and Bangkok. Three years after his accession to the throne Mantha-Thourath received two envoys from Vientiane, Mun-Heua-Kham and Phalatsay, who proposed a secret treaty of friendship. King Anou, who was impatiently enduring his Siamese guardianship, suggested that they should forget past quarrels and unite their strength against the suzerain of the West whose power was increasing in an alarming fashion. Mantha-Thourath accepted the two racing pirogues which the two ambassadors brought him in behalf of their master, but was somewhat timorous and refused to enter into any agreement (1). The following year 648* 175* /431/

1. One of these pirogues has been preserved in the Tioun-Khong pagoda.

643• On the occasion of his cremation the king of Siam sent the
648 mandarin Tiao-Khoun-Tholama with numerous ritual gifts (3)
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3. 240 ticals, three hundred parasols, thirty bonzes' costumes, silk and calico goods, etc. (Annals).

in order to confirm both his sentiments of friendship and his rights of suzerainty over the principality which from then on was to constitute the last vestige of the great kingdom of Lan-Xang.

/205/ CHAPTER VI

THE SIAMESE EXPANSION IN THE MEKONG BASIN DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (1836-1885)

175• It was after the downfall of Vientiane that Siam's star rose and that its leaders' ambitions were revealed in all their completeness. With Cambodia in complete decline, the Burmese thrown back and the Laotian principalities either destroyed or tamed, the reconstruction of a great Thai empire to the profit of Bangkok must naturally have haunted the minds of its kings. But in order to achieve this dream they still had to consolidate their recent conquests from the lands of the left bank of the Mekong and to extend them from north to south towards natural frontiers, and then finally to gain recognition of this hegemony by the neighboring States. In the accomplishment of so great a task they were to come up against a formidable adversary with whom they were already well acquainted for having encountered him along the way. This was the sovereign of Annam.

648• /206/ Siamo-Annamite rivalry in Cambodia. As a matter of
175• fact, the first contacts between the Siamese princes and the lords of Hue did not go back much beyond the end of the seventeenth century. Before this they had been separated not only by the great mountainous barrier to the east, but also by Champa and Lan-Xang. The destruction of the first and division of the second had favored the Annamite overflow towards the Mekong, and the total ruin of the Kmer kingdom (1) had accelerated the latters' gradual advance

1. On four occasions, in 1357, 1394, 1420 and 1460, the Siamese had sacked Angkor. In 1587 they had occupied the provinces of Tonle-Sap. At the beginning of the eighteenth

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846 "In delivery of the afterbirth, which takes place just after the cord has been severed, the midwife pulls on the cord with her right hand while with her left hand she presses [190] on the patient's abdomen so as to force out the placenta (1). When the latter offers

(1) The midwives of Upper Laos do not take any steps to free the placenta. This organ comes out by itself, although the time it takes may vary. After its expulsion it is placed (together with the strip of bamboo used as a knife to cut the cord and with the clots of blood) in the bamboo cylinder mentioned above. Then the whole is immediately buried under the threshold of the house or at the foot of one of the stringers of the ladder or staircase giving access to the house. (Author's note.)

too much resistance the parturient woman lies down on her stomach and presses heavily on the ground, while the midwife continues to pull on the cord and assists the patient's efforts with one hand.

846 "If a uterine hemorrhage does not ensue the vagina is bathed with spiced water, the patient's legs are placed together and she is then laid in front of a fire of live coals where she must remain for nine days, her abdomen facing the heat (2). During these nine days

(2) Thirty days for primiparous women and from seventeen to twenty days for pluriparous women, in northern Laos. (Author's note.)

she must abstain from eating certain foods, and particularly from chewing betel because of this plant's astringent qualities. She swallows a certain amount of salt every day and drinks laxative tisanes which are often made with grapefruit rinds. The genitalia are bathed for the first five days after delivery, always with slightly spiced water.

"If a uterine hemorrhage occurs after delivery the parturient woman is made to swallow about fifty grams of urine to which a heavy dose of spiced oil has been added. The vagina is bathed with a decoction of highly astringent plants, among which the dried bark of the areca palm may be mentioned.

846 "At the end of confinement the midwife extinguishes the fire
431 herself and receives a few gifts (3) which vary with the condition of

(3) These gifts generally consist of a skirt, a scarf, small jewels,

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wax candles decorated with flowers, cigarettes and a sum of money. (Author's note)

the family from the hands of her patient.

"Two or three days after her confinement ends the mother must go to the pagoda and give a few presents to the bonzes, who give her in return a few cotton threads which she fastens to her wrists " (4). [751] [792]

(4) Dr. Estrade, 1895. Dictionnaire et Guide franco-laotien. [113]

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Cases of dystocia and other childbearing difficulties are very rare in Laos, thanks to the physiological law which decrees that childbirth shall occur all the more naturally insofar as one comes closer to the primitive type and as one's body has not been deformed either by certain professional attitudes or by artifices of dress. [191] But when any difficulty of this type does occur the Laotian midwives are extremely skilful. Their hands take the place of the steel instruments in our gynecological and surgical arsenal, and their results are usually successful both for mother and child.

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When the newly delivered mother is allowed to get up there occur traditional feasts and celebrations, the brilliance of which varies with the status of the young mother's parents. It is generally during these happy gatherings that the bonzes or sorcerers choose the name which the newborn child is to bear. They usually base their choice on some peculiarity of the coloring or eyes, or on a phase of the moon. The name will be replaced by another if the child falls sick, for in this case, as they say, the old name was unpleasing to his "Phis," that is to say to his personal tutelary spirits.

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Infanticide. Scarcely any cases of infanticide can be cited in Laos, and abortions are extremely rare or at least very well hidden. For when cases do occur it is among members of a class which, because of the rank it holds, is anxious to conceal its faults from the mass of the people.

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In popular belief abortion, whether voluntary or natural, is regarded as a punishment of heaven or as a case of aberration which cannot fail to draw down the utmost scorn on the guilty parties and their accomplices.

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Marriage. Marriage in Laos is made ready for long in advance, thanks to the liberty which young people of both sexes enjoy. The latter meet one another at every celebration and can communicate

314 Indeed scavenging, that is to say the gathering of forest products, hunting and fishing, is all that is needed besides rice and maize to supply the day to day needs of the native and even provide him with a comparatively important basis for trade.

Forest Products

1. Benzoin (Khab-Niane).

314 824 Benzoin is extracted from the tree called Styrax benzoin, by means of incisions made on the trunk. The benzoin trees (Kok-Khab-Niane) are localized in Upper Tran-Ninh, the south of the Hua-Pahn and the north of the province of Luang-Prabang. They are not cultivated in 563 any way. The resin or gum is harvested at certain times of the year, generally by the Khas, at the foot of the trees and along the trunk, where it coagulates in masses or tears.

Benzoin is collected in its natural state, that is to say in tears of various sizes and in breakages. In the production centers it is separated into three grades: large and medium tears, medium and small tears, and small pieces and breakages. In the transit markets these three grades are sorted and screened and once more divided into six kinds or types, which are: large tears, medium tears, small tears, mixed large, mixed medium, and finally tiny fragments and dust.

431 A few years ago a chemical process was [329] discovered, it would seem, for extracting certain of the aromatic alkaloids contained in benzoin from coal, and the market value of this product suddenly dropped by more than sixty percent. At the present time, depending 435 on the grade, the market price in Luang-Prabang is from 90 to 115 francs per hundred kilograms (1), in Nong-Khay from 100 to 135

(1) We have deemed it preferable to give the price in francs and per hundred kilograms, since the reader may not be familiar with Laotian weights and currency.

788 francs, and in Korat from 120 to 160 francs.

314 439 Part of the benzoin production is consumed locally in the manufacture of sticks of incense for use in worship. All the rest is exported to Bangkok and from there to Europe. A very small proportion is sent to Tonkin by way of the Black River. Upon its arrival in Bangkok, benzoin from Laos is worth twice as much as in Luang-Prabang.

824 314 2. Crimson lake or stick-lac (Khang-Deng).
This gum is produced by an insect of the "cochineal" type, the